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TO THE SOURCE OF THE ORINOCO

by

JOSEPH GRELIER

Translated from the French by H. A. G. Schmuckler

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Guahariho Indian of the Padamo river. (*Photograph by J. Grelier*)

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TOP: One evening, thirteen Guaharibos from the Padamo arrived. (*Photograph by J. Grelier*)

BOTTOM LEFT: Guaharibo Indian. Notice the length of his bow and arrows. (*Photograph by J. Grelier*)

BOTTOM RIGHT: Guaharibo woman. (*Photograph by J. Grelier*)

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TOP: The River Cunucununa, domain of the Makiritare Indians.
(*Photograph by H.M. King Leopold*)

BOTTOM: Community hut of the Makiritares at Jakaré on the Cunucununa.
(*Photograph by J. M. Cruxent*)

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Young Makiritare woman in festive dress.
(Photograph by J. M. Cruxent)

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Makiritare Indian of the Cunucunuma river.
(Photograph by J. M. Cruxent)

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The Indians of the Upper Orinoco—Guaharibos and Makiritares

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SINCE Theodor Koch-Grünberg's pronouncements on the subject, anthropologists and ethnologists are agreed that the Indians inhabiting the Guiana *massif* fall into three distinct " layers " of population. Differentiation between the layers is relatively easy as each represents a different stage of development, and there has been no marked overlapping of territory. The newly-arrived groups thrust back the original occupants either violently or gradually and then infiltrated themselves among the earlier arrivals. The vastness of the region and the thinness of the ever-shifting population made such occupation simple. Indeed, the great Guiano-Amazonian forests support fewer human beings than some parts of the world where there is an almost complete lack of vegetation. Paul Lecointe estimated in 1920 that the population density was about one inhabitant for every twenty-seven square miles.

Trade and war have brought about some racial mixing, but strong racial customs and the barriers of language have done much to retain the individual characteristics of the groups. Thus ethnologically the region is like a jig-saw puzzle with pieces of changing outline, fast, slow, sporadic, seasonal, but each playing its part in the final picture.

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Arawaks

The Arawaks are farmers on an extremely moderate scale, and excellent watermen. They inhabit the country adjacent to the rivers Negro, Guainia and Atabapo; the principal tribes being the Banibas, the Barés, the Kuripakos and the Piapocos. Coming from the west and south-west they seem to have occupied the regions gradually and peacefully, advancing eastwards as far as the River Merevari. They have imposed their

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they have imposed their
mark in the names of the rivers, the word-endings -ari, -uni, -eni, meaning river or water. The ending -ari, often altered to -are, is ubiquitous west and north-west of the Orinoco as far as the foothills of the Andes—evidence of the former extent of the Arawak race. Most of the boatmen we recruited

MAP SHOWING DISTRIBUTION OF INDIAN TRIBES IN THE AREA OF THE UPPER ORINOCO

in the Orinoco basin and on the Amazonas slopes were Arawaks. As a result of countless voyages up and down the great rivers and as a consequence of many an invasion they are, anthropologically, a very mixed lot, even showing traces of Negro blood.

Caribs

Caribs were the late-comers to the territory. They include the Arekuna, the Yauarana, the Mapayo, the Yekuana and the Bekuana.
[i.e. The Arawaks -- Analyst]

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M 648 175 [101] the Bekuana. The last-named[1] are better known by the name *Makiritare*, an Arawak word meaning "River Folk" or "Those of the River". The date of their arrival can be placed at about a century before the Spanish conquest. They came from the north, probably from the Antilles, conquering, pillaging and well-organized. They hustled the peaceable Arawaks, who were ill-prepared to defend themselves, southwards and to some extent intermingled with them. Their southward drive stopped short at the Upper Orinoco, for it is here that the domain of the unconquered Arawaks begins, extending south and west of the Casiquiare and the upper Rio Negro. Their advance was halted by the resistance of the Guaharibos, Shirianas and Waïkas, who have ever since remained their implacable enemies. The Caribs adopted none of the manners and culture of the Arawaks, preferring to impose their own customs on their victims. They ferociously resisted the Conquistadores who were frequently compelled to procure their victuals by force and whose morals and methods in doing so did not often accord with the Christian ideal on which they prided themselves. The early Spanish chroniclers described the Caribs as "proud, brave and warlike".

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In the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, English, Dutch and French adventurers all made use of the Caribs in their smuggling activities along the coast or up the big rivers between the Essequibo and the Orinoco, and even in their affrays against the Spanish hegemony. The Caribs are great travellers, fine sailors and boat-builders. They are invariably chosen as guides by explorers and are ever ready to boast of the services they have rendered in this capacity.

M [181]

Detached Groups

131 The oldest of the peoples of the area is the great family of Guaharibos, Waïkas, Shirishanas (or Shirianas), who occupy a vast part of the Upper Orinoco and its tributaries the Padamo, Ocamo, Manaviche and Mavaca. They are to be found in the mountainous region, wrongly known as Sierra Parima; on

[1] [i.e. the Bekuana -- Analyst]

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the upper reaches of the Caura and Caroni rivers; and on the tributaries of the upper reaches of the rivers Negro and Branco in Brazil.

In his classification based on families of language, Koch-Grünberg includes these scattered groups under the heading "Detached Groups", a term he uses for all linguistic groups that do not belong to either of the main families, though he acknowledges their anthropological and linguistic kinship. The fact that they inhabit the most distant and least accessible regions, that they are dispersed over so wide an area, and that they are subdivided into clans which frequently number no more than a dozen individuals, strongly suggests that these people are a "residual population" that has doubtless been thrust farther and farther back by successive waves of invasion.

The four or five thousand Piaroas and Guaharibos who inhabit the territory of the Middle Orinoco, between Puerto Ayacucho and San Fernando de Atabapo, are also classified as "Detached" by Koch-Grünberg. Anthropologically it would seem that these two peoples are comparatively remote from each other. As we have no information as to the time of their emergence and settlement in their present zone of habitation, we may perhaps assume that all of these groups constitute, or did once constitute, the original stratum of population, without necessarily coming from the same stem.

Three small clans, tiny pockets of people geographically isolated from each other which cannot as yet be related to any of the big families already mentioned, also appear on Koch-Grünberg's ethnological map. These are the Makus. They occur on the River A[illegible]ri, where they occupy no more than a single hut; on the Ventuari, where they number about eighty; and on the Iñirida, where they are known as Puinabes. It has been suggested that these last could conceivably be the descendants of the Guaypunabis whose chief, Ceseru, joined with Solano in founding San Fernando de Atabapo and Santa Bárbara.

Thus the classification of the Indian peoples of the

9:Grolier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SQ 18
Guaharibo

101 Guiano-Amazonas district of Venezuela, is neither so simple nor clear-cut as it at first appears. None of the Indians of the Guianian highlands are natural settlers. The more primitive groups, who live entirely from cropping the forest, fishing and hunting, are compelled to lead wandering lives; and those who practise agriculture and live in villages are ever ready for [167] a change of scene. These things, allied to an ingrained migratory instinct, lead them to keep moving about the country throughout their lives.

More Guaharibos from the Padamo

123 On the afternoon of May 25th another party of Guaharibos arrived at Esmeralda. I was approaching the jetty in one of the boats when I heard Francisco shouting from the other bank. It was nothing new to hear Francisco's bellowing; whenever he had killed a tapir that was too heavy for him to carry alone, or when the day's bag was too big to be loaded on his minute *curiara*, he would give tongue in this manner. I turned back to join him and as I did so he pointed with a paddle to an Indian craft which till then had been hidden from me by the bank-side vegetation. I steered towards it, standing up in the boat and making gestures of welcome and friendship. For an answer two men stood up timidly in their [501] boat as I went over to them and circled round them. Their craft, which rocked buoyantly in my wash, was built of a single strip of bark. It was similar to the one the children had left behind them, but bigger and contained thirteen people. Then I led them back to the landing-stage.

The official reception of these people we left to Butrón, who had a wonderful gift for this sort of thing. He quickly had some machetes brought out as gift-offerings. Of the boat's crew nine were young men in their teens, two of whom had their faces blackened with charcoal. Among them was Mopare, the eldest of our first visitors. Two children of about six and two young women tried to efface themselves against the bottom [291] of the boat. The youths wore some cotton material round their middles which was secured back and front by a belt of string. The women wore a sort of fringed apron no more than a few inches across.

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Guaharibo

than a few inches across. All had their ears pierced by sticks slightly thicker and longer than a cigarette. Their paddles were short and as crudely constructed as the boat itself, some being roughly rounded and others no more than discs lashed with lianas to a pole handle.

To these primitives we must have appeared a strange collection. Who are these beings—they must have asked themselves—who go about dressed, shod and bearded, and who point queer things at us which go "click"? And the many boats lined up there, that go so fast and make much noise! Mopare had probably told them wonderful tales, but since he had left the camp when it was still in embryo, he was doubtless as much amazed by its present size as the others. There was a moment of hesitancy and then Butrón held out a machete and said: "*Shori! Shori! Noji!*" He told us this meant "friend" or "relative". In exchange for the machete, he demanded the man's bow and arrows. The size of the bow surprised me, since it was taller than the man himself. One by one the Indians disembarked and surrendered their arms in exchange for machetes. All except a fine, well-built brave who seemed to be their leader and who remained sitting in the stern of the boat, watchful and silent. The women, still cowering, stayed near him. At last, seeing his companions on shore and our attitude giving no cause for mistrust, he was reassured. Courteously and with dignity he held out a hand to the women, who were still apprehensive.

"Padamo?" we asked him.

"Padamu, Padamu," he replied.

The final vowel, nasal and strongly accentuated, lies between "o" and "ou". The word is indigenous and has been the river's official nomenclature since the time of Diez de la Fuente.

"Guaharibo?"

Another nasal sound which cannot be transcribed followed. It was a sort of grunt and could have meant "Yes". And then: "Guaharibo".

"Waïka?"

A worried look, followed by the gesture of bending a bow.

"Waïka—pfft! Waïka—pfft!"

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Guaharibo

123 [648] From this we deduced that the Waïkas and the Guaharibos, although belonging to the same racial group, do not always live together in complete harmony.

142 Generally speaking, the Guaharibo is not as tall as the average white man. Though he is of slender build, his chest is thick-set and his arms are muscular and we attributed this to his regular use of his immensely powerful bow. His skin is lighter than that of the Makiritares and his eyes are brighter. His hair, too, is less dark and is cut with a fringe all round the head. Body hair is but feebly developed and the men are [302] practically beardless. The two women in the boat were delicately made and quite pretty; they adopted a similar hairstyle to the men but rather longer. Their breasts, small and conical, contrasted with the opulent, hemispherical breasts of the [302] Makiritare women. One of them was clearly the wife of the leader of the party; the other appeared to belong to one of the men with the charcoal-blackened face.

123 Our Guaharibos very quickly became less suspicious, though they still kept close together. Each grasped his machete as though it were treasure, the women and children doing so, [136] too. Hardly had they disembarked than they were assaulted by the *plaga*, which were always at their worst at this time of day. The unfortunate Guaharibos in their nakedness fell an easy prey to them and were soon hopping about and slapping themselves with their hands and the flat blades of the machetes. Obviously they had come from a less infested country, probably from the banks of a black water river.

"General" Butrón, who had several times had contact with the Padamo Guaharibos—or at least with their cousins the Waïkas—suddenly produced a bundle of incredible rags which he had picked up God-knows-where, and began to distribute them. The scene that followed was quite grotesque. The women were no more capable of putting on a dress than the men were of donning trousers. We had to dress them as if they were infants, and replace missing buttons by string. As soon as night fell and the *jejenes* left us in peace, they promptly discarded these embarrassing and tawdry impediments.

We made over to them a newly-built *rancho* situated in the

9:Greller K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SQ 18
Guahariba

middle of the camp, but they preferred to sleep under a simple palm roof resting on four poles which had been erected near the river as a temporary measure when the first advanced party arrived. There they hung their hammocks, made of the same pliable liana threads as their loin-cloths. Apart from their bows and arrows, these hammocks were the only possessions they brought with them. Thus they passed the night close to the river and their boat. They lighted fires and kept them burning all night. Not all of them slept in hammocks. Some squatted on the bare ground close to the fires, but those who used hammocks slung them low to get the maximum benefit of the fire's heat, for all slept naked.

The next morning they came over to the empty *rancho* where we gave them *manioc*, which they knew and appreciated as a special treat. But they refused the cooked food we offered them. One or two of them tasted it, but quickly spat it out. We offered them meat and learned that they cook their game without first skinning it. We gave them salt, which was new to them and which they spat out with dreadful grimaces. It was probably the salt that made them refuse our cooked food. They never tired of *manioc*, and we discovered that *manioc* and *machete* were the only two Spanish words they knew.

The Guaharibos have a curious and revolting habit of secreting in their mouths between the lower gums and the lip a roll of green tobacco as big as the stump of a fat cigar. They do not chew it; it remains there unbroken all day while two streams of greenish juice continuously trickle from the corners of their mouths. Even the children and sometimes the women indulge. The lump, which horribly deforms the lower part of the face, making it look hideous, may have contributed to their reputation for ferocity and savagery. The preparation of the tobacco quids is the duty of the women. The fresh tobacco leaf is rolled with wood-ash, and then the women chew and soak it in spittle until it reaches the right proportions and consistency before passing it on to their mates. Cardona told us this was the universal practice.

The Indians' fear and suspicion of us quickly dispersed.

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Guaharibo

123 From the second day onwards their audacity began to become a nuisance. Pots, pans, empty boxes, string, knives and, of course, machetes, constantly excited their greed and began to disappear, to be concealed among the rocks at the foot of the hills. From then on we had to keep our stores, bags and dixies under lock and key. During the daytime they roamed about the camp, driven by curiosity to see so much that was new, but with the night they would again herd together round their [152] fires at the water's edge. They were very jealous of their women-folk and paid them the most touching attention. One [758] of the women was frequently shaken by violent fits of coughing and each time her mate would bring her a gourd of water he had drawn from the river and support her while she drank. When the coughing started again, the poor man's face would take on an expression of powerless solicitude.

595 As far as I could discover the Guaharibos are monogamous
162 and their women are definitely in the minority—as evidenced by the present group of nine men and two women. When, by
578 means of signs and gestures, we asked the unattached males
684 whether they had no wives, the answer was in each case in the negative. Cardona told us that the most common cause of
838 quarrels among them is raping of the women. We thought
201 that homosexuality was also probably common practice. We
123 had no actual proof of this, but saw many instances of gestures—usually among themselves, but occasionally directed at us—which were, to say the least, equivocal. To the Guaharibos such gestures were obviously natural and proper behaviour.

123 In order to watch their reactions we fired a few rounds of
411 ammunition. Accustomed to the silence of the forest and trained to hear the least rustle of sound, they betrayed instant terror. Clapping their hands over their ears, they fled. We invited them to demonstrate their own weapons. They handled their powerful bows with astonishing ease and accuracy and could send their light arrows, five to six feet long and made of straight reed stems, nearly a hundred yards. With a termite hill some eighteen inches high and twelve inches across as target, they hit it consistently from fifty yards. Shooting

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Makiritare

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TOP: Makiritare woman grating yucca roots, an ingredient in the preparation of manioc. (*Photograph by J. M. Cruxent*)

BOTTOM: The poisonous juice of the yucca is extracted by means of a "sebucan", a large piece of expansible basket-work. (*Photograph by H.M. King Leopold*)

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Makiritare Indian making a back-basket.
(Photograph by J. M. Cruxent)

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This basket of thin, carefully-chosen lianas, is decorated with the same pattern—a stylised frog—nine times repeated.
(Photograph by J. M. Cruxent)

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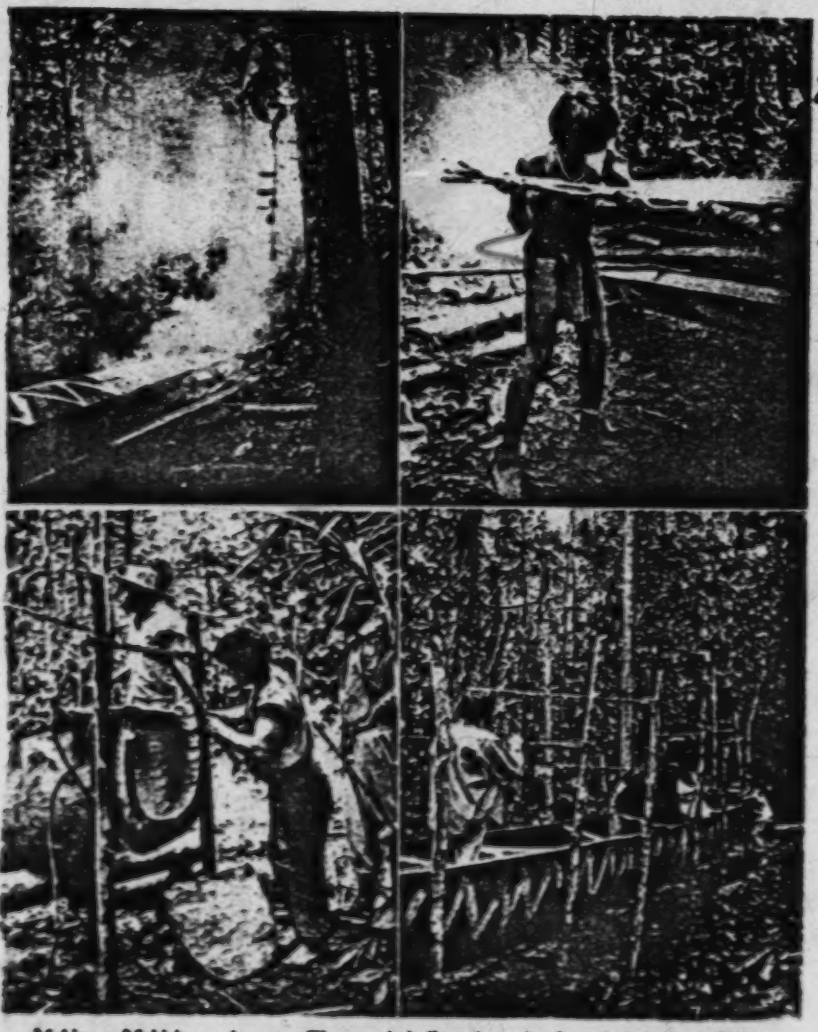

Making a Makiritare pirogue. The tree is hollowed out by fire where it lies. This pirogue is being built for us and is to have a transom stern to take an outboard motor.
(Photographs by J. M. Cruxent)

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Cerro Yapacana dominates the river from a distance of almost a mile. (*Photograph by J. Grelier*)

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Our three "lanchas" lashed together tow a retinue of *curiaras*. (*Photograph by J. Grelier*)

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Raymond Pélégri aboard the radio-pirogue. (*Photograph by J. Grelier*)

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vertically into the air was particularly spectacular. The bowman stood with his left arm extended holding the bow over his head, his back arched and body relaxed. Then, pulling on the bow-string slowly to keep the arrow steady, he would let fly, his body dead-still as he watched the arrow climb upwards, spinning like a top.

As happened on the occasion of their first visit, our Guaharibos took themselves off one morning before dawn. Our cook, Evaristo, pointed westwards across the savannah where we could see them outlined in the tall grass as they walked with their backs to the sun.

The Makiritares of the Cunucunuma

M 114

In 1886, Jean Chaffanjon, the French explorer, visited the Makiritares of the middle Cunucunuma and wrote an enlightening account of them, saying that they spoke tolerable Spanish. In 1949 de Civrieux and Lichy also went up the Cunucunuma; accompanied by Makiritares, they reached Mount Marahuaca. More recently still Dr. Hans Baumgartner, former head of the Health Department of the Amazon Federal Territory, visited them. Although they are generally known as Makiritares, these Caribs prefer to call themselves Dekuanas. "Makiritare" means "River Man" in Arawak, and at one time must have rung out like an alarm call when the pillaging conquering hordes were on the march. To-day, though the number of Makiritares in Venezuela does not exceed seven hundred, their influence still dominates the Upper Caura, the Upper Padamo and the Cunucunuma rivers, where they are to be found in greatest concentration.

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M 133

The Cunucunuma flows into the Orinoco some thirty-five miles below Esmeralda, its waters making good some of the loss sustained at the Casiquiare fork, where some of the Orinoco's water drains into the Amazonian Rio Negro. It is a beautiful river, whose black and white waters intermingle. It receives the torrents that pour down Duida's western flank and from Marahuaca, the two tallest monuments to the former sandstone expanse of the Guianan *massif*. Two hundred yards from its mouth the Cunucunuma is broken by rapids which

M [502]

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133 [502] the Makiritares delight in shooting in their fine canoes. Upstream it flows past huge flat-surfaced rocks that either break the surface of the water or lie just below it. Beyond its banks, hills and rounded granite knolls intrude on the forest and occasional sandstone peaks, their porous terraces around them overgrown with savannah grass, are also to be seen.

361 342 Six villages line the banks of the Middle Cunucunuma, of which the most important, Jakare and La Culebra, are above four sets of rapids. They are built on the savannah surrounding the towering wall of Cerro Piapoco and each has a tribal house looking like a cylinder with a conical head-dress of palm leaves. The other houses of the village are rectangular in shape, some having an apse-like projection at one end and a few 342 at both ends. The tribal house at La Culebra measures thirty-six feet across and twenty-seven feet high. Its walls are made of perpendicular stakes retained inside and out by horizontal branches. The cavity between the inner and outer walls is filled with a mixture of mud and dry grass. Finally, the outer surface is plastered with mud which, when it dries, cracks along the length of the branches beneath, and gives it the appearance of a brick wall. The circular wall is pierced by a single door just about the height of a Makiritare, so that the average European has to duck his head to enter. The steep-to palm roof extends well beyond the walls to make wide eaves. High up near the top there is a sort of pigeon-hole window.

The door is always kept carefully shut and semi-darkness prevails within. Each family has its own place against the wall and its own fire. Thus the centre remains open and common property. It is to the centre of the house that the villagers go after the day's work of grating cassava tubers to [574] make *manioc* is over. It is also the part reserved for visitors, whether friends or strangers.

241 [361] Unlike the Guaharibos and the Waikas, the Makiritares are not nomadic. Agriculture has settled them as it has settled the Piaroas. Every Makiritare village has its plantations located about some distance away in the forest. Cassava is the main

[see plate, bottom of p. 64-C.. Am.]

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Makiri'tare SS 20

crop, but maize, bananas, pineapples and sugar-cane are also grown. The preparation of *manioc* from cassava is the work of the women as, also, is the cultivation of the plantations themselves. The bitter cassava contains prussic acid and so the juice must be extracted from the pulp before the pulp itself is grated. This is done in compressible cigar-shaped baskets. The upper end of the basket is hung by a ring from a horizontal beam and a wooden lever is passed through another ring at the other end. When the pressure is applied the juice is forced through the interstices of the basket work. The gibbet for this press is usually erected close to the big hut and not far from a wall-less structure, which houses the communal hearth. There the granulated meal is baked into large flat cakes of cassava on iron pans bartered from Fajardo. The cassava cakes are afterwards put out to dry on wattles or simply on the roofs.

The Makiritares also enjoy the fruits of the forest and river which they harvest by hunting and fishing, particularly during the dry season from November to April. When hunting they use either a bow or the blow-pipe. The bows they obtain mostly from the Guaharibos in exchange for machetes, knives and thread for angling, which itinerant Guaharibo dealers peddle from dug-out canoes. The blow-pipes they make themselves, but the precious, much-feared curare, which they use for poisoning their arrow-tips, comes from the Piaroas. The Piaroas in exchange use Makiritare blow-pipes. Thus it is that no native, no matter how primitive and remote from his fellows, is independent of his fellows in other tribes, and the Makiritares are at the centre of these exchanges.

The dry season, when the water holes are few, is the principal hunting season and *barbascos* provide bountiful fishing when the rivers are low. Poisonous vegetable alkalis from crushed bundles of plant stalks are drawn through the water by the women, while the men wait downstream in their canoes or on the banks to harpoon the drugged fish as they come to the surface. Many of the fish thus caught are dried, and sometimes ground into fish-meal, to provide iron-rations or a commodity for barter.

[see plate, facing p. 80, bottom -- Analyst]

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731 In spite of their plantations and their skill in hunting and
262 fishing, the Makiritares occasionally experience periods of famine. At such times, when the children cry from hunger, they will dig up the foot-long earth-worms which abound in the humus under the undergrowth and eat them either raw or boiled. Frogs, too, then become part of the daily menu. I have seen Makiritares away from their village, when food was hard to come by, carrying no other provisions than dried frogs threaded like beads on a string.

123 We knew we should have to increase our flotilla of canoes, and to add more Makiritare boatmen to our strength as we proceeded up the Orinoco and the Rio Negro, but it was a necessity calling for discretion since we dare not risk the success of our enterprise by entering the territory of the Guaharibos with too many Makiritares in our company.
[122] Furthermore, we were counting on obtaining from the Cunucunuma villages the greater part of our *manioc* supplies; this formed not only the staple diet of our men, but also became an important part of our own diet. Frantz Laforest was most anxious to be *persona grata* with the Makiritares, so that he could observe and study the building of their fine Carib canoes at each phase of construction.

396 The method, he discovered, was to select a suitable tree, usually a variety of mahogany, and remove all branches for a considerable length of its trunk. Then followed the stripping of the bark and the rough shaping of the ends of the boat. Next the trunk was deeply hollowed out, first by means of a machete along its entire length, and then by fire which slowly enlarged the trough started by the hatchet. The longest operation, which took several days, was opening up the trough by means of wooden wedges, the growing hull being meanwhile
[531] held in position by means of cross-members. When all was complete the boat's sides were made waterproof by scorching, and decorations in the form of geometrical drawings were added. The vessel was eventually introduced to its natural element by hauling it from its place of building over wooden
[123] rollers to the water's edge.
[177] In spite of their skill in building the traditional type of

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canoe, the Makiritares were less successful when it came to replacing the customary pointed stern with a transom to take our outboard motors. Makiritare canoe-paddles are heart-shaped and are decorated with arabesques engraved with a red-hot iron. Since sawn wood or boards are unknown, the paddle has to be shaped from the limb of a tree or, more commonly, from the " above-ground " roots of the giant silk-cotton tree. This is a delicate wood, easy to work, but brittle.

A paddle is the Makiritare child's first toy. From the overgrown streams, which are no more than tunnels of greenery, to the turbulent rapids of the big rivers, both sexes navigate their craft with equal skill. Though every vessel is hollowed from a single tree-trunk, many of the larger *curiaras* measure up to forty-five feet in length. One which was built for us carried a load of five tons and needed a crew of from six to eight men to handle it.

All craft-work—whether it is building houses, boats, baskets or weapons—is essentially the work of men. Basket-making is rated high on the list. Some of the panniers, wattles and *manioc* presses, made of the slenderest lianas, were among the finest basket-work I have seen. The quality of the material and the high standard of workmanship clearly showed the close relationship between basket-work and weaving. The round, shallow baskets on which the Makiritare offers his guest a variety of dishes are invariably made up in at least two colours, either by previously dyeing the lianas or by using lianas of different natural hues. The designs are either geometric, or human- or animal-shaped. The latter are markedly stylized but the same motif is never identically repeated. The frog is by far the most frequently represented. The artistry displayed showed a keen sense of observation and an inherent love of natural animal beauty. When, later, at Esmeralda, a number of Makiritare families came to collect the " chicle " resin from which chewing-gum is made, I was surprised to see the men devote their leisure hours to the manufacture of these elegant little baskets purely for the pleasure of creating something beautiful.

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama
Makiritare 5520

533 Every Makiritare group seemed to have its own musician,
[534] whose functions were to some extent ritual. Each evening
he would play his bone flute in the big hut, producing
534 not unpleasant sounds. Another instrument, known as the
[755] *maraca*, Cordona said was sacred, being used in conjunction
with incantations to cure the sick. It is a rattle made
from a hollow gourd containing special stones from the
[778] river bed. The Indians believe that these stones, strangely
shaped by nature, have some beneficent power, and they guard
them jealously. Cardona recorded some of the chants and
incantations.

301 Like all Indians, the Makiritares have a love of bright
[302] colours and finery. Many of the men and women paint their
[437] faces and most wear cotton bracelets round their wrists, knees
and ankles. They make great display of the multi-coloured
[531] glass beads which are highly valued in the barter trade. The
women decorate small lozenge-shaped aprons with them,
usually favouring blue with geometrical patterns in contrast-
[304] ing colours. The men make ear-rings of reed the thickness of
[292] a pencil and push them through holes pierced in their ears,
and on special occasions they wear head-dresses of big macaw
[237] feathers. Their loin-cloths are made of the brightest cotton
materials. Coins, which they have come to know only recently,
[177] they fashion into ornaments by beating them against flat
stones; the women make ear-rings of them.

* * *

648 Though the Makiritares trade with their primitive and
[439] troublesome Guaharibo neighbours—whom they call "Shiri-
shanas", meaning "monkey men"—their relationships are
not always friendly. Wandering Guaharibo tribes often
pillage the Makiritares plantations and, indeed, the father of
one of our Makiritares had been killed during such a raid.
And for their part the Makiritares are not above forcibly
carrying off the Guaharibo women. The wife of the chief of
La Culebra—quite a pretty woman—was Guaharibo. These
women have much finer features than the Makiritare women
and many of them are bi-lingual, speaking the Makiritare

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama
Makiritare S520

tongue almost as well as their own. The two languages are quite different and distinct.

We wondered how true was the statement that at the end of the eighteenth century many Makiritares could speak Spanish with some fluency. If there were any truth in it at all, there had obviously been considerable backsliding since, as less than half a dozen of the Cunucunuma Makiritares we met could speak more than a word or so of the language of the Conquistadores and the early Jesuit priests.

The Salesian missionaries, most of whom are Italian, pay only infrequent visits to the Cunucunuma and none has ever settled there. The North-American missionaries, on the other hand, actually live with the Indians, learn their language and adopt many of their customs. One of them, an indomitable woman named Flora Trutel, lived for years with the Makiritares, wrote a grammar of their language, and became an authority on their rites and beliefs. She died quite recently at the Protestant mission at San Fernando de Atabapo, worn out by missionary work.

The Indian is shy of giving his real Makiritare name to a stranger and very seldom does so. One of our boatmen, for instance, we knew by the exotic name of Watiti, but one day we learned that he had been baptized Juan Baptista. Baptista had soon become corrupted to Watita, which eventually he changed to W'atiti as being prettier.

Though the Makiritares trade regularly with merchant firms, they do so only through the pedlars who visit them, since they will have no dealings with civilized villages—called "rationals" in Venezuela. Moreover, San Fernando, the nearest and most important village, is several hundred miles away and the Indians have no outboard motors. Nevertheless, they cover enormous distances by boat and on foot, crossing from one river basin to the next and bartering trumpery wares in the most remote regions. Many of them know the territory they cover so well that with distances expressed as "day's journeys" they are able to draw maps in the sand and even correct our maps. Their stocks for barter are so varied that many a Guaharibo who has never seen a

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama
Makiritare SS20

439 white man is nevertheless quite familiar with packets of
[177] aspirins.

On meeting other Indians who have reached a stage of
186 advancement similar to their own, the Makiritares show a fine pride of race and this pride is one of their most engaging characteristics.

[p. 89 not processed]

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SQ 18
[P.90] Makiritare SS20
Guaharibo
Y 439
M 439
438

Pedlars trading with Advanced Makiritares		Advanced Makiritares trading with Pedlars		Advanced Makiritares trading with Less Advanced Makiritares		Less Advanced Makiritares trading with Advanced Makiritares		Less Advanced Makiritares trading with Guaharibos		Guaharibos trading with Less Advanced Makiritares	
Sell	Buy	Sell	Buy	Sell	Buy	Sell	Buy	Sell	Buy	Sell	Buy
Nails Adzes Hatchets Machetes Pots Knives Glassware Cotton Goods Aspirin Rum Mirrors Combs Sewing Thread Fishing Line Fish Hooks	Dug-out Canoes *Manioc* Casabe Baskets Finery Blow-pipes Resins Gum (Chicle)	Nails Adzes Aspirin Rum	Hatchets Machetes Pots Knives Glassware Cotton Goods Mirrors Combs Sewing Thread Fishing Line Fish Hooks		Baskets Finery Blow-pipes Resins Bows and Arrows		Pots Glassware Mirrors Combs		Hatchets Machetes Knives Sewing Thread Fishing Line Fish Hooks	Bows and Arrows	Hatchets Machetes Knives Sewing Thread Fishing Line Fish Hooks

Table drawn up by J. M. Cruxent showing the barter objects in most common use among the Cunucunuma Makiritare Indians. It will be noticed that hatchets, machetes, knives, threads, and fish hooks are the only goods of industrial manufacture to reach certain of the Guaharibo Indians, who, for their part, offer nothing but bows and arrows in exchange.

[P. 91 - 105 not processed]

9:Grolier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SQ 18

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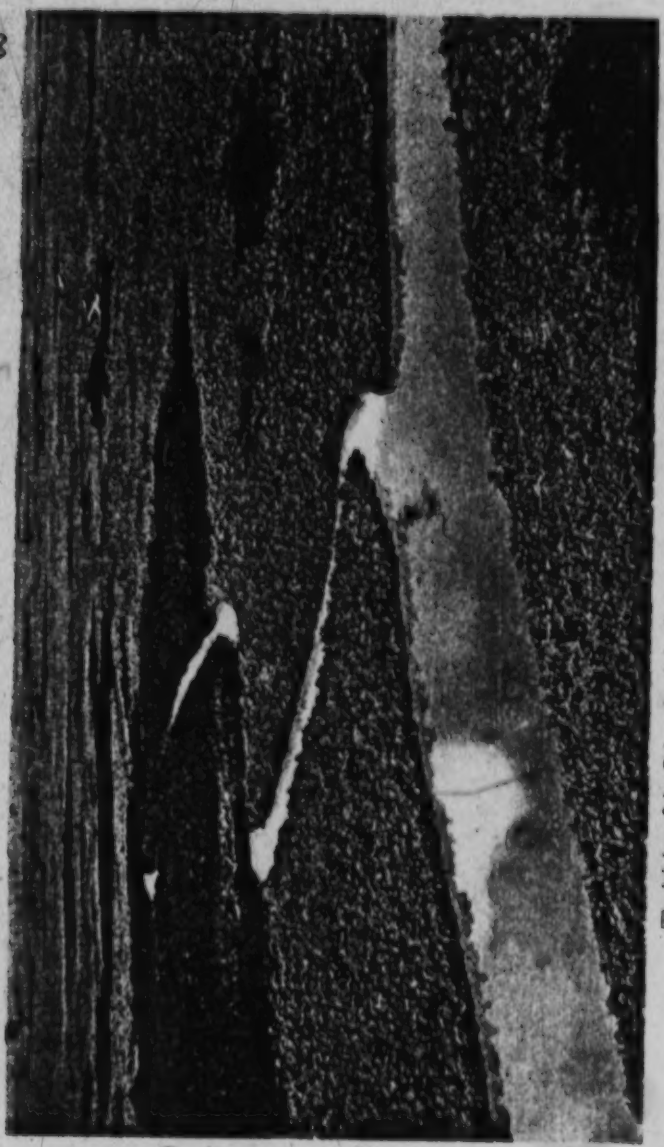

The joining of the Orinoco and the Casiquiare. (*Photograph by H.M. King Leopold*)

[p. 96-A]

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SQ 18
Waica

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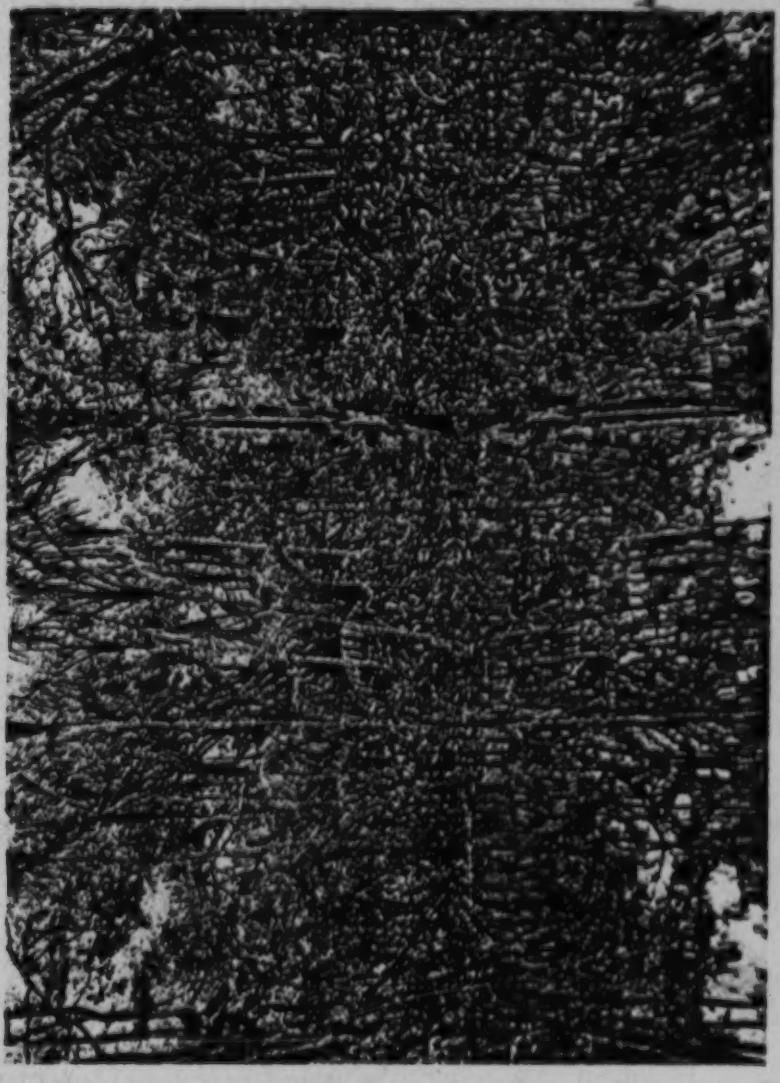
TOP: The famous Piedra del Cocuy juts upwards from the forest.
(Photograph by H.M. King Leopold)

BOTTOM: The first Waikas appear between the trees and hail us.
(Photograph by J. Grelier)

[p. 96 – B]

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SQ 18



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Flooded forest. (Photograph by H.M. King Leopold)

[p. 96 - C]

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SA 18
Waica
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TOP: The Waikas jump aboard as soon as we touch the shore. Notice lower lip extended by a quid of tobacco. *(Photograph by J. Grelier)*

BOTTOM: This one has just received the gift of a pencil. Notice the shaven skull and the scars on the scalp. *(Photograph by J. Grelier)*

[p. 96—D]

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SQ 18
Venezuelan Indians SS4
Makiritare SS20

6

Esmeralda to the Guaharibo Rapids

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M
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EXPEDITIONS above Esmeralda differ from those elsewhere on the Orinoco in that no experienced guides are available. Native boatmen, wherever they may come from, are boatmen and not guides. In de la Fuente's time, the Makiritares frequented and sometimes inhabited the upper reaches of the river and its tributaries as far as the Padamo, but beyond that limit they were scared to go for fear of the terrible Guaharibos. It was the same with the Baré Indians who accompanied Chaffanjon in 1886 and who several times tried to desert. More recently, in 1931, Spencer Dickey's men were equally apprehensive. But none of these expeditions ever left the river.

On the Sipapo the Piaroas make excellent guides, and Guahibos on the Vichada are equally ready to assist. Going up the Ventuari several explorers have recorded how they were handed from one settlement of Makiritares to another when they were crossing territory shared with the Guaharibos. The watershed between the Ventuari, Merevari and Auari rivers is a traditional cross-roads where Makiritares have established villages and plantations at each intersection.

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[361]
Y
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Cardona Puig is the only explorer I know of who has been guided by Guaharibos, Waikas or Shirishanas and he was repeatedly up against taboos, forbidden paths and places from which he was compelled to retrace his steps—not always unscathed.

• • •

At noon on July 13th Pablo Anduze, the entomologist who is known throughout Venezuela as "Dr Mosquito", Butrón and I left Esmeralda for the Guaharibo Rapids where we were to set up Base Camp No. 2. Like Esmeralda it was also to be a research centre. Twelve natives accompanied us of whom

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SQ 18

one, a Guahibo, refused to be parted from his wife. Butrón 123
christened her Ana-Maria and she stayed with the expedition as cook and mascot almost to the end.

The Guaharibo Rapids are the first major barrier on the [133]
Upper Orinoco and only Chaffanjon, Dickey, and Butrón with his wood-cutters had ever got beyond them. Even the precise location of the rapids themselves was open to question since what one has called the Guaharibo Rapids another did not.

Butrón was in command of our convoy, his old launch towing half a dozen *curiaras* and *falcas*. Though the river was in spate there was water enough for the launch only as far as the foot of the rapids. From there on we should have to man-handle our native craft up the rapids as best we could.

Our cargo consisted of heavy cases of reserve foodstuffs and the greater part of the expedition's *manioc* supply. We also carried petrol in forty-four gallon drums and four-and-half gallon cans, and a great mound of newspapers and blotting paper for drying plants which Croizat and Couret had entrusted to our care. Finally we had a considerable quantity of knives, machetes and other barter-ware. Our job was to prepare the way for the main body of the expedition who would follow as soon as their work at Esmeralda, particularly the archaeological diggings, was completed.

The heavily-laden launch made slow progress against the fast-running current. With the river full to its maximum, the banks, undermined by the rush of water, kept caving in under the weight of their vegetation. Forest trees came spinning and turning downstream. We passed many small tributary streams often without noticing them, so closely knit were the enveloping trees whose lower branches were washed by the water. There seemed no chink in the impenetrable wall of vegetation and I caught myself repeating de Civricux's phrase: "No way but the river, no horizon but the forest." There could be no question of sailing by night through such waters and so we made good use of the last remaining daylight by slinging our hammocks in tiers one above the other so that all fifteen of us could spend a comfortable night under the launch's awning.

The next day we passed the Padamo and its flood waters

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SQ 18

123 were, if anything, even more violent than those of the Orinoco. At its mouth it is about three hundred yards wide compared to the four hundred yards of the Orinoco just below the juncture. Chaffanjon, doubtless influenced by wishful thinking and his growing proximity to the river's source, stated these widths to be only eighty and one hundred yards respectively. He similarly exaggerated his description of the ruggedness of the river-bed. But inaccuracies of this kind were by no means uncommon among explorers of the last century, as Jean Hurault showed of Anatole Coudreau's account of his exploration of the rivers of French Guiana.

123 The Padamo comes down Marahuaca—probably the highest
133 massif of the Guianan mountains—in a series of waterfalls. It is fed by two major tributaries, the Voltamo and the Matacuni, the last named rising in that remarkable "water tower" formed by the junction of the Sierra Parima and the Sierra Pacaraima; here rise the Ventuari, the Erebato, the Merevari, the Auari and the Ocamo.

Three hours later we reached the Ocamo, above which the Orinoco becomes noticeably narrower, for only the Mavaca now remains as a tributary of importance. The Mavaca, whose upper reaches were explored by Cardona in 1941, runs practically parallel to the Orinoco in a generally westerly direction until it is diverted northwards where it meets the mountains and joins the main river. These mountains are shown in Diez de la Fuente's sketch-maps and are the cause of the Orinoco's north-western change of course as far as Esmeralda. Formed of layers of sandstone, their summits tower high above the forest. We had not realized that the sandstone Roraima Formation extended so far east nor, for that matter, so far south. Until then, we had accepted the generally-held belief that the granite mass of Piedra del Cocuy was typical of the mountains east and south of Duida. Observing from the river, it seemed to me that the sandstone beds were not horizontal, though it was not possible to observe either the angle or direction of their dip.

[27] We were using Hamilton Rice's sketch-map (scale 1–750,000) embracing the Rio Negro, the Casiquiare, and the Upper

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SQ 18

Orinoco to the Guaharibo Rapids. On this the river's course is given in great detail, showing not only the major tributaries but a great many minor ones as well, though there is no indication of their size. From first-hand experience it was clear to us that the contribution of some of the lesser tributaries was anything but negligible. There are, for instance, the Iguapo, which joins the Orinoco from the right ten miles above Esmeralda after itself being joined by a river its own size, and another river, unnamed as far as I know, which has its mouth midway between the Padamo and the Ocamo. And entering from the other bank come the Lipe and the Icipe, of which the latter is eighty yards wide at the confluence. Of these four only the Iguapo has been explored and that by Diez de la Fuente.

Above the Mavaca the Orinoco's mean width is less than two hundred yards. Its general direction of flow is east to west with a slight northern tendency and surprisingly, since it nowhere else does so in its thousand miles journey from Mavaca to the sea, it twists and turns pronouncedly.

Since we had left Esmeralda the only birds we had seen were single specimens of black ibis, large kingfishers and droves of white egrets. The egrets would sit craning their necks in the trees and, as we approached, would fly up only to settle down a little farther away. It was as though no human being had ever disturbed their forests. Once or twice we saw a pair of otters diving from a rock or dead tree stump and once we shot at an anaconda which was placidly coiled round a tree. We watched as it slowly unwound and disappeared into the murky water.

That evening we took one of the *curiaras* up a small tributary and fished, but the spate was too strong. Instead of fish we gathered some forest cocoa whose pulp is a refreshing drink when newly made.

The First Waikas

The Padamo and Ocamo rivers are inhabited by Guaharibos. Above the Ocamo, the inhabitants of the Orinoco's banks call themselves Waikas. They closely resemble the Guaharibos we had met at Esmeralda but are, perhaps, a little more primitive. Some had had previous contact with Butrón's wood-cutters.

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SQ 18
Waica

[P. 110]

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ARROW HEADS

1. Notched point designed to break off in the wound. These points measure from eight to twelve inches in length. 2. Bamboo blade pointed at both ends and therefore reversible. 3. Harpoon point. The bone barb is skilfully bound in position. 4. Small knife; made from the incisor of the capybara and fixed to a wooden handle. The whole measures about six inches. 5. The Waika is rarely separated from his quiver made from the stem of a bamboo in which he also carries his firestick.

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SQ 18
Waica

It was on July 15th that we encountered our first Waikas. We were sailing close under the left bank during the late afternoon when we heard hoarse cries near by. Two naked Indians with faces and bodies painted violet showed themselves among the trees. With excited gestures and brandishing their bows, they motioned us to come closer.

"*Shori! Shori!*" they shouted.

"*Shori! Shori!*" we repeated and held up machetes for them to see.

By the time we had found a suitable landing-place on the bank the two had become six—six young men laughing, shouting and jostling each other excitedly. All were painted. While we were still making fast, they plunged into the water and hoisted themselves aboard. We gave them machetes and *manioc* and they gave us bows and arrows in return. Judging from the way they fingered our clothes, boots and beards we must have appeared very peculiar creatures to them. All the time they kept saying "*Shori! Shori!*" and we responded as in a litany, "*Shori!*".

Physically the Waika is no different from the Guaharibo. He has the same stocky body and contrasting thin legs. His hair is cut monk-fashion with the top of the head shaven. He wears no clothes but a string of forest cotton which serves as a belt and keeps his privy member tied upwards by means of a knot round the prepuce. On his arms above the elbow he wears a bangle of tightly woven cotton, monkey's fur or bird's skin. His ears are pierced to take ear-rings of reed. Sometimes a bunch of different coloured parakeet's feathers, or toucan's feathers, is used for this purpose. Occasionally he will wear a belt of cotton threads died with ochre. At first we thought this to be a badge of rank or authority, but later we saw so many of these garments and they were offered so readily as barter that we had to revise this idea. Another frequent form of adornment is the pelt of a capuchin monkey worn on the head like a tiara. And all of these ornaments, besides bows and arrows, were freely offered to us in exchange for knives, necklaces and matches.

The bow is the Waika's only weapon. Made of strong,

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SQ18
Waica

supple wood and well over six feet long, it is very powerful. With it the Waika can shoot an arrow more than a hundred yards and can hit a *panjil*—a bird about the size of a turkey—at forty yards. Normally two or three arrows are carried and they are as long as, if not longer than, the bow itself. The shafts are made of reed which, Cardona said, is specially grown for the purpose on their plantations, and are feathered by falcon's feathers. The feathers are meticulously tied in a near-perfect spiral with thread of forest cotton or morisco palm fibre. Each arrow has a different head specially adapted to a particular purpose. Spare arrow-heads are carried in a quiver in which also is carried fire-making material to protect it from the damp.

The quiver is a simple bamboo case to which are also tied a firestick and a number of little knives made from the incisors of a large rodent called a capybara. It is carried on the back by means of a string slung round the forehead.

Such comprise the simple impedimenta of the Waika on his journeys through the forest. The women, who accompany their mates on their many ceaseless wanderings, presumably have their own burdens to carry, but we saw nothing of them until we visited our first native village on the next day.

As we went up-river we came across the remains of a rude bridge which had formerly spanned the two hundred yards of river and which had been carried away by the flood waters. It was the biggest bridge we had seen although we had passed a number of lesser ones fashioned of lianas spanning the tributaries. On the bank where the bridge had been were some twenty natives and a handful of children.

"*Apo! Shori! Apo!*" they greeted us.

We knew from Butrón that, though his men were accustomed to replenish their banana stocks at this place, they had so far never been allowed to visit the village hidden somewhere in the forest.

The Waika lives on wild fruits, fish, meat and the produce of plantations adjacent to his villages. Most of his time he spends wandering in the forest and his fleeting appearances at his village occur usually only when natural resources fail or when he has to defend himself against an enemy horde. He knows

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SQ 18
Waica

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Waika Indian of the "Pianoai". (Photograph by H.M. King Leopold)

[p. 112-A]

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SQ 18
Waica

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Waika family of the "Planana". (Photograph by H.M. King Leopold)

[p. 112 - 8]

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SQ 18
Waica

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TOP: Women of the "Parauna". Notice the household goods. The two types of hammock are clearly shown. *(Photograph by H.M. King Leopold)*

BOTTOM: Swapping. The little things we brought excited curiosity and greed. *(Photograph by J. Grelier)*

[P. 112-C]

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SQ 18
Wa'Ca

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The Waika always carries with him his little knives made of a rodent's incisors. (*Photograph by J. Grelier*)

Below: Pierre Ivanoff and one of our Waika friends. (*Photograph by J. Grelier*)

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[p. 112-D]

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama 5918

his jungle intimately—where to find palm dates, cocoa and brazil nuts in their season, and where game birds are most plentifully found. He hunts the herds of peccary, his ear, versed in all the sounds of the forest, detecting his prey before they detect him. When the water in the rivers is low he shoots his fish with arrows and when the sand banks are uncovered he hunts tortoise eggs buried in the sand. His interminable wanderings are limited only by his forest lore; he lives only for the day, his sole reserve of food being a small store of bananas brought from the village plantation.

Platanal

As we closed the shore our reception was tumultuous. From the high bank above us the Indians leaped yelling into the water and clambered on board, shaking themselves like wet dogs. Laughing and gesticulating they took hold of our mooring lines. Though some of us were a little overcome by this display of exuberance, Butrón was not in the least disconcerted. He knew that the Indians had long learned to associate him with machetes and *manioc*. As soon as it was possible to do so, Butrón had a basket of *manioc* and a dozen machetes carried ashore, and the Indians who had already begun to ransack our cargo left it and hurried ashore.

"*Shori! Manioco! Oji!*" they cried striking their bellies. They jostled round the basket, stuffing handfuls of the coarse flour into their mouths, their heads thrown back in ecstasy.

As the Waika have no knowledge of contriving the simplest of iron tools, or of grinding *manioc*, all such articles were highly valued objects of barter. So were matches, once they had been shown how to use them.

Butrón told them we wanted the large green bananas which are eaten cooked; the accepted tariff is three hands of bananas for one machete. Before long, we heard some of the natives making merry in the plantation, and made as if to follow them. But at once the others became suspicious and gestured to us to return to the river bank. We insisted and they became menacing, finally refusing to go on gathering the bananas if we did not desist.

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SQ 18
Wai'ca

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On the riverside where the bananas were being stacked, we came across a strange character. He was a white man, young and prematurely bald, who watched the proceedings calmly, almost diffidently. His trousers and shirt were impregnated with the violet dye the Indians smear on their bodies. I went

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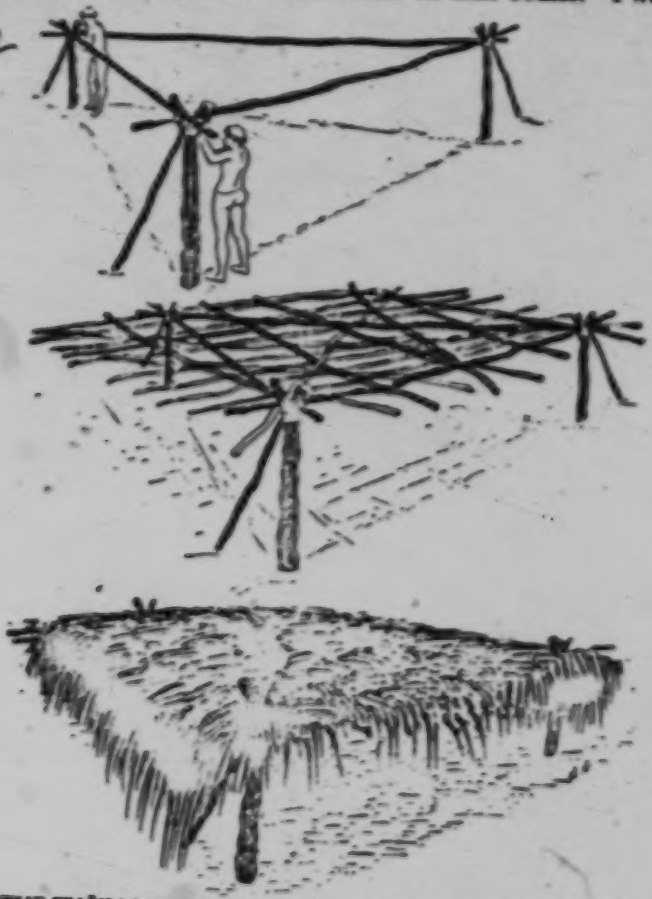

THE WAÏKAS BUILD THEIR HUTS IN A MATTER OF A FEW MINUTES. THE HUTS ARE ALWAYS BUILT TO THE SAME PATTERN

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SQ 18
Waica

forward to meet him and he introduced himself as James Barker of the Evangelist Mission of San Fernando de Atabapo. He told me that he and a companion now up at the village had been living with the Waikas for the past seven months. He added that the Indians had sunk the boat in which they had come so that they were now quite isolated. He spoke their language fluently and his attitude to them was that of an indulgent schoolmaster.

I told him of our desire to see the village and he spoke about it to the Waikas. They were at once suspicious and reluctant; even when they eventually agreed, agreement was far from unanimous. Nevertheless, we fell in behind Barker and marched up a slippery path so muddy that I began to envy the forest people their nakedness. We came to a recently made clearing which had been cleared by fire and I tried to slip away up a little-used path. At once the Indians objected, their vehemence suggesting that the plantation to which the path probably led hid many wonderful secrets.

After twenty minutes of marching we came to a fence in a clearing. The fence was made of stakes lashed together forming a perfect circle. I thought this must be the village but we passed it by. A hundred yards beyond we came to another similar enclosure and this time our guides led us inside. As we entered I remembered what Pierre Ivanoff had told me of an earlier occasion when he and three companions had succeeded in reaching a Waika village. The first enclosure we had just seen was undoubtedly the counterpart of the one in which he had been forced to dance with his hosts before being allowed to go on to the second. In the present instance the dance was omitted from our programme.

Inside the enclosure, which was some thirty yards across, huts were built with their backs to the palisade, leaving a circular space in the middle shaded by a big tree. The corner of each hut consisted of three stakes in the form of a tripod supporting horizontal rafters of green wood tied in place by lianas. Wide-eaved roofs were thatched with banana leaves. The circle of fencing was unbroken except for the single entry. A pungent, musty smell pervaded the place as we

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SQ 18
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(609)
entered. It was deserted ; the women and children had doubtless fled at our approach and were now probably hiding in the forest or the plantation. This would explain why the men had been unwilling to allow me to wander off on my own.

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[291]
After a time they began to filter back. The boys were the

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WAÏKA FORTIFIED VILLAGE, "PLATANAL"

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first to return, the younger ones wearing nothing but an armlet above the elbow, and the older ones wearing the string round their hips and knotted to the prepuce. Then came the women, the oldest first, followed by the younger ones with their babies.

[302]
All were completely naked and all wore their hair cut in the pudding-basin fashion favoured by the men. They kept close together, chattering ; some began idly swinging in their hammocks in their houses. When we tried to approach them the men followed close on our steps.

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SQ 18
Waica

I tried to take some photographs of them, but they cowered back behind each other, clucking like frightened chickens, and the men gestured to me to stop. One of them, a one-eyed old man, despatched a stream of spittle from his quid into my face. 123

"*Shori! Noji!*" I protested, and laughed. I got out my comb and combed my hair and beard. He came over and examined the comb and my hair and stroked my beard. Then he, too, laughed.

"*Shori!*" he repeated.

I set about combing his crown of short bristly hair. He laughed louder and spat heartily. I slipped my arm round his shoulders and placed the view-finder of my camera against his good eye. He groaned and hopped from one foot to another, and I pressed the release. Then he laughed again and allowed himself to be photographed but he would not allow me to take pictures of the women until we had made further gifts of knives.

In the missionaries' hut, which was identical with the others, we saw the beginnings of the first Waika dictionary. While we were there a native came up and led me to a hut where his wife was suckling a few-week's-old baby. The baby's two-year-old brother was playing in the dust with two mangy dogs as thin as a skeleton and of no recognizable breed. The child's [164] body was covered with scabs about the size of threepenny bits. Quite obviously the father expected me to do something about the affliction, and I made up my mind to give Barker some tubes of sulphonamide. Barker told me that infant mortality [165] was high among the Waikas, adding that he had never known a child to be born or to die within the village enclosure. Since the sojourns of these people within the village were invariably brief, birth and death invariably occurred in the course of their peregrinations.

The men and youths all had deep scars on their scalps, made 142 the more conspicuous by their shaven crowns. In answer to our inquiries we were told in gestures that these came from some sort of stick or club, but whether in battle or ritual, we could not discover. (The following year King Leopold III's [114] expedition to the same area saw similar long head-scars among Waika women.)

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302 Both men and women and even the small children paint their
[386] faces and bodies with a violet-ish dye extracted from the edible berry of the manaca palm. Sometimes the dye is mixed with the red clay from the river bank. As a dye it persists well, for it often has to compete with many layers of dirt and does not
302 seem to wash off with sweat or rain. The patterns in which
531 it is used vary considerably. All-over dyeing of cheeks and forehead is common, though sometimes vertical lines are preferred, either straight or wavy. The designs are never angular and the same *motif* is rarely repeated. One freshly-painted warrior had his face, neck and chest painted all over a violet-red, while his back was painted with a series of half-inch polka dots arranged in parallel lines. Dots of this sort were also commonly used with artistic purpose on the upper and lower limbs. To heighten the contrast some used charcoal to blacken themselves.

123 Some explorers of these forests have tried to read ritual or
302 war-like significance into this painting of the body. But since we frequently found freshly-painted individuals in company with some whose paint was paling and some who were not even painted at all, I do not think this theory holds good. I believe it is no more than the expression of a desire to be beautiful, although it is true that at a later date, when the natives became menacing, they were all freshly painted.

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352 The furnishing of Waika huts is very simple and orderly, each hut containing anything from four to ten hammocks, and every inch of space being used by slinging the hammocks one
[286] above the other. Some of the hammocks are woven from
[283] threads of forest cotton dyed in ochre, which quickly fades, while others are made of thin lianas crudely knotted at their
[287] ends. We saw none of the bark hammocks which the natives invariably use on their journeys. Each hut is the centre of
592 a family unit, two families sharing the same hut only when the village is crowded.

162 In the present village of about two hundred and fifty people, which we called Platanal, only about forty were adult males.

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Barker told us that it was no more than a temporary stopping-place on one of the jungle trails, no family ever remaining for more than a week. And so we found on our various return visits. The inhabitants were always different and their numbers varied considerably. Barker could not tell us how frequently these villages occur in the forests. He said he had been to only one other during his seven months' stay.

Every home possesses two or three calabashes, gourds and baskets, all dyed with ochre and some decorated with macaw or toucan feathers. All such objects of daily use have loops of string tied to them by which they can be hung from the hut's roof. Each family also has its little knives of capybara teeth. Firesticks are kept carefully packed away to keep them dry during disuse, as fire is always available from glowing embers that are never allowed to go out. We saw a number of baskets which women carry on their backs, but could not discover what they were used to carry—probably household utensils in the course of their journeyings. I could find no Waika musical instrument, but in one hut, the only one with no hammock in it, I came across a sort of fibre cape hanging from a beam. As this was the only garment of any sort that I saw, it may well have been a ritual robe.

In every house there was at least one fire, and joints of unskinned peccary and branches of green bananas hung from many rafters. In an unornamented earthenware jar shaped like a bell we saw a peccary's head boiling whole with all its hair and skin. In another hut a child was eating a small alligator which had been grilled on the embers.

The Waikas do not know salt and spat out the little we gave them in disgust. We thought that perhaps the huge quid of tobacco which the men, women and children keep under their lower lips might perhaps compensate for this deficiency. As with the Guaharibos, the women make up the quids every morning, impregnating them with their own saliva before passing them on to their mates.

Barker said he had never known Waikas to build or use any sort of river-craft—not even a raft. He told us that the

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He told us that the

499 building of their crude bridges is a lengthy and laborious business and quite impossible when the river was in spate.

123 We returned to the river to find that those we had left behind had removed the boats to a safe distance—a wise precaution, since it was desirable not to excite the greed of the natives. Many an expedition, we knew, had failed through being looted because this elementary precaution had [648] been overlooked. Furthermore, such incidents can lead to serious conflict, as Cardona had learnt on more than one occasion. When dealing with such primitives, caution, good humour and nursery diplomacy are the essential safeguards.

As we pressed on up-river other Waikas hailed us from the banks. We did not stop, nor did we make any presents of manioc, knives and machetes to those who followed us, running through the undergrowth, and gesticulating and shouting as they ran. We spent the night in the shelter of a rocky island they could not reach.

The Guaharibo Rapids

123 By now the river's width was no more than a hundred and 133 fifty yards. Though its course no longer wound as it had, the current was no less strong. Rocky banks that plunged steeply into the water and boulders across the river-bed created violent currents and our engines had to go full out to give us the least headway. If the water had been low we should have been able to pass only with the greatest of difficulty. We passed through one such rocky race which Butrón said was the Guaharibo Rapids. Actually they were the Yamaraquin Rapids marked on Hamilton Rice's map and characterized by a huge pyramid-shaped reef. Butrón called the rapids, where we intended setting up Base Camp 2, the Waika Rapids, distinguished, so he said, by a group of islands of rock and sand, of which two were comparatively large. These were mentioned by both Rice and Dickey, who called them the Gua- [131] haribo Rapids. Rice gave their precise position as Latitude 2° 18′ 18″ N., Longitude 64° 38′ 46″ W. We arrived there at eight o'clock on the morning of the 17th.

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The Guaharibo Rapids are caused by the presence of a barrier of extra-hard rock—granite diorite or diabase—which sand and water cannot erode so easily as the granite base. The water meets this barrier and either pours over it in a waterfall or descends less precipitously through a race strewn with rocks and reefs which mark the slow recession of the fall. Sand worn from the rock also accumulates to form islands. The main race from its crest is about two hundred yards long, secondary channels being set up by the presence of islands. On the largest of these islands we set up camp. 133 123

Here the river again ceases to be navigable, but we hoped by using the greater depth of the flood waters to be able to push our way up through one of the secondary channels. If this failed, the only alternative would be to haul the boats overland. Whatever happened, these rapids marked the end of a phase. Once passed, they would cease to be an objective, becoming instead no more than a stage in our progress to the river's source.

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133 But ibis in immense droves refused to be disturbed as they
123 covered each new sandbank that was born.
(136) The water was as clear as if it had been filtered, its reflection of the sun blinding. Dark patches of smooth water amid the rippled surface elsewhere betrayed the next sandbanks to uncover.

We left behind the Padamo, Ocamo and the Mavaca, and all the time the river got narrower. We passed the nights on great flat platforms of rock which got larger as the water went down; with machetes we killed fish trapped in the rocky pools left by the receding stream. A dish of ananas and fish, half-soup, half-stew, is very tasty. It is called sancoco and from now on became our staple diet.

123 From Esmeralda we had brought supplies of sugar, coffee, salt, some oil and four big baskets of manioc from which we [136] made coarse bread at all hours of the day. Several times we saw fresh water turtles clinging to the rocks and once or twice succeeded in catching one. But they are wily creatures and usually they dived before we could get near them. One we caught was handicapped by an injured foot which the men asserted was the work of a caribe. Unfortunately, it was too early for the females to be laying their eggs in the sand—they would have been manna, indeed.

123 We arrived at Platanal on November 21st to find that the
721 bridge had been cut down and learned that this had been deliberately done "for strategic reasons". The Indians greeted us like old friends and unhesitatingly took us to the village. There we found feverish activity on all sides. A boy had been kidnapped from the plantation and another killed [764] by an arrow through the chest. The corpse had been cremated amid ritual weeping and the ashes stored by the family in an urn sealed by wax. Not until the death had been avenged could they be mixed with the dust of the lad's ancestors.

[712] The men had strengthened and consolidated the fortified enclosure and cut down the screen of trees round the village. Sentries had been posted and the entry through the fortification had been concealed by palm-leaves. Women were

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bringing in supplies from the plantation and distributing them among the huts. They were obviously preparing for a long siege.

Barker, the missionary, told us he had thrown his shot-gun into the river to save him from having to take part. Rape, he said, was at the root of every conflict—the kidnapping of boys or girls according to whether a clan had a surplus of men or women without mates. Sometimes a young warrior had to [555] prove himself and in such cases rape is the best method, since it tests endurance, patience, resource and skill no less than strength.

On this occasion, the women had lost all their earlier bashfulness—a group of six of them never leaving us. We had seen the eldest of them twice before, and three of the others had been in the village when we had passed through on our downstream trip. It seemed they must have vouched for our friendliness for nobody asked us for machetes and matches. 123

On returning to our boat we found six stalks of bananas had been put in it for us. We were sorry that we had nothing but a little *manioc* to offer in return. As we left we met three Waikas from a neighbouring clan. In honour of their hosts [302] and doubtless to cut a good figure, each had painted himself all over with violet dye.

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We passed the Guaharibo Rapids at dawn on November 22nd and by the following day were at the foot of the rapids at Perlascal. We had brought lifting tackle to use where necessary, but with only four of us—and somewhat tired at that—we were anxious to avoid overland portering wherever we could.

The falling water had uncovered acres of rocks with little channels running between, offering a safe passage through. At other times we had to assault the main channel knowing that if the engine gave out we must lose boat, provisions and equipment, if not our lives. For this reason, if ever there was enough water to float us in any subsidiary channel, we took it every time.

[pp 172 to end of book not processed]